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ABSTRACT

The Northern Marianas are a chain of 14 islands in the western Pacific, north of Guam, which together constitute the self-governing Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas. The population of the islands in 1987 was approximately 36,000 with most of the inhabitants living on Saipan, the largest island. Sixteen thousand of these people were aliens, mostly Korean, Chinese, and Filipino. Schools follow a U.S. curriculum, and school attendance is required through grade 9 or until the student is 16. School enrollment is about 6,200. About half of all students fail to complete high school. Located on Saipan, Northern Marianas College, in conjunction with San Jose State University, offers baccalaureates and a master's degree in education. Approximately 300 students are enrolled in postsecondary courses in colleges and universities in Guam, Hawaii, and the U.S. mainland. The bibliography section of this document lists 34 English-language items dealing with education in the Commonwealth. (JB)

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GENERAL INFORMATION

AND BIBLIOGRAPHY OF

ENGLISH-LANGUAGE

MATERIALS

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February, 1989

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EDUCATION IN THE NORTHERN MARIANAS

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Northern Marianas are a chain of 14 islands in the western Pacific, north of Guam, which together constitute the self-governing Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas. The islands were discovered by Magellan in 1521, who named them the Ladrones Islands, and were given their present name when they were occupied by Spain in 1668. The native population, called Chamorros, revolted and were removed to Guam. Spain sold the islands to Germany in 1899, which resettled the islands with Carolinians and some surviving Chamorros, many of mixed ancestry. Japan occupied the islands in 1914, and was given a League of Nations Mandate over them in 1920. Over 40,000 Japanese and Okinawans settled in the Northern Marianas Islands, and developed a sugar industry. The islands were devastated in heavy fighting in 1944- 1945, and became part of the U. S. Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands in 1947. The islands were run by the U. S. Navy until 1962, when administration was transferred to the U. S. Interior Department. In 1975 78% of the people voted to become a Commonwealth of the United States. Japanese tourism and garment factories are the main industries. Saipan is the largest

island, with most of the islands' 36,000 people. The 1987 census showed 16,000 of these people were aliens, mostly Korean, Chinese, and Filipino., employed in construction work and garment factories. The alien population was only 2,866 in 1981.

Schools follow an American curriculum. School enrollment is about 6,200; 80% of whom attend public schools. The schools are open 180 days a year. School attendance is required through grade 9 or until the student is 16, but about half of all students who enter the Commonwealth School System fail to complete high school. The public schools received \$ 8,500,000 to operate in 1985-1986, this being 12% of the Commonwealth's total budget of \$ 70,500,000. An additional \$ 8,600,000 was received as federal funding for the schools. Per pupil expenditure was \$ 2,331 per pupil, second only to Guam in American Micronesia, but considerably below the \$ 3,442 estimated in the United States.

Saipan has a tertiary institution, the Northern Marianas College. This College, in conjunction with the University of

San Jose State University, offers baccalaureates and a Masters Degree in Education. About 300 students are enrolled in post-secondary courses in colleges and universities in Guam, Hawaii, and the U. S. mainland.

The Northern Marianas College has a library, and a small public library also operates on Saipan. There are also book collections in ten of the public schools.

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